CONSUMER TIME

BEHIND THAT LABEL

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1. SOUND: CASH REGISTER RINGS TWICE...MONEY IN TILL

2. JOHN: It's CONSUMER TIME!

3. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER.

4. ANNCR: During the next fifteen minutes the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations make their facilities available as a public service for the presentation of CONSUMER TIME by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

5. PITCHMAN: (PROJECTING) Step right up here, folks...step right up! Only twenty-five cents, the fourth part of a dollar! Doctor Joy's amazing cure-all. Takes away the pain...eases aching joints...restores gray hair to its natural color...helps fallen arches...and prevents the common cold! Step right this way, folks...the trial size of Dr. Joy's amazing cure-all (FADING)...only twenty-five cents...two bits...and guaranteed to cure...(OUT)

6. JOHN: Yes...back before 1906, you...or your family...might have been very likely to buy such a wonderful cure-all! A little skeptical of course, that it would do all those things... but, well perhaps there might be something to it! You'd buy a bottle, just to give it a try.

7. FREYMAN: Yes...and little would you know, then, that this miraculous medicine would be, say, one part kerosene, two parts turpentine, with a little flavor added!

8. JOHN: But you'd take it, in good faith, after every meal perhaps, to"give it a try", because it promised to do so much!

9. FREYMAN: And maybe you'd live through it.

10. JOHN: And maybe not!

11. FREYMAN: And that, Johnny, brings us to our story today. Today, CONSUMER TIME friends, we're going to tell the story of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

12. JOHN: What's behind the label on your medicine bottle...what the work of the Food and Drug Administration had been in war... and what it is in peace.

13. FREYMAN: Let's start off, Johnny...by telling a little about the functions of the Food and Drug Administration.

14. JOHN: Well, Mrs. Freyman...their function is to enforce five statutes which were designed to insure the honesty and purity of foods, drugs, devices, and cosmetics.
And the Food and Drug Administration, now in the Federal Security Agency, was established by Congress in 1927, to administer these statutes, whose purpose is to insure purity of certain commodities and see that they are truthfully labeled.

15. FREYMAN: The personnel of the FDA includes chemists, bacteriologists, physicians, veterinarians.

16. JOHN: And microscopists, pharmacologists, inspectors, and many, many other specialists...here in Washington, and all over the United States.

17. FREYMAN: These scientists are one big reason why you don't ever hear anymore...

18. PITCHMAN: (PROJECTING) Step up here, folks, and buy this super-sensational guaranteed 100 percent cure-all. Cures all aches and pains in 15 minutes flat...cures appendicitis, color blindness, deafness and is (FADING)...guaranteed to make you strong in 30 days...(OUT)

19. JOHN: No, you don't hear that now, unless of course the medicine will do exactly what it promises. And under the Food and Drug laws, that medicine must be clearly and truthfully labeled.

20. FREYMAN: Today your medicine is labeled with directions for use...and warnings against misuse...for your protection.

21. JOHN: Congress, when it passed additions to the Food and Drug Act of 1906, said:

22. MAN: Many consumers, unable or unwilling to consult physicians, attempt to prescribe for themselves the remedies they need when aches and pains lay them low. You don't have to look far to find people who took the wrong medicine at the right time, or the right medicine at the wrong time. Now since people's health and their very lives are a concern of the Nation's, we outlaw drugs sold across State lines, whose claims are false or misleading in any particular; whose labels fail to show the net contents. Drug labeling, by law, must now carry adequate directions for use and adequate warnings against misuse! And it must tell the names of the actual ingredients.

23. FREYMAN: /Today, before a new drug is placed on the market, an application must be filed with the Federal Security Administration. There it is tested in FDA's scientific laboratories... to make sure that it isn't harmful.

24. JOHN: For now...drugs must be pure, and prepared under sanitary conditions...

25. FREYMAN: And a medicine must not differ in strength, purity, or quality from that claimed in its labeling.

26. JOHN: Drugs containing habit-forming ingredients, must bear the statement...

27. MAN: "Warning...May be habit-forming".

28. FREYMAN: And you're familiar, now, with the usual information appearing on the bottles in your medicine chest.

29. MAN: "Do not take more than the dosage recommended".

30. JOHN: "Avoid swallowing".

31. MAN: "Do not use this prescription when the cough has persisted for ten days, without securing competent advice."

32. FREYMAN: Yes, in these and the many other simple, clear statements which the manufacturer prints on your medicine bottles, you are protected. You know just what that medicine contains; you know it is pure; you know when and when not to take it.

33. JOHN: Years of careful research are behind this protection. And years of watchful vigilance on the part of American manufacturers.

34. FREYMAN: Today, too, containers for medicines and drugs can not be deceptively made, or filled. When you buy today, you get your full measure.

35. JOHN: Now, of course, the vast majority of food and drug manufacturers conform to the standards in every way. They are doing a legitimate and honest business.

36. MAN: And their cooperation allows the Food and Drug Administration to concentrate on the small proportion of manufacturers who are violating the law in some respect; whether deliberately or unknowingly.

37. FREYMAN: Inspectors are on the job all over the country. They see that food and drugs are packed in a sanitary way; that the products are pure; that they are labeled truthfully.

38. JOHN: An important function of these Food and Drug inspectors is to trace down and confiscate dangerous drugs or poisonous foods which may have been widely distributed by mistake.

39. FREYMAN: Such an incident occured only recently. Let's hear what happened. In a drug manufacturing plant, it was discovered that a wrong ingredient had got into some medicine by mistake, but it was discovered too late. The now dangerous drug had already been bottled, packaged, and sent on its way. The president of the firm, panic-stricken, called the chief inspector of the Food and Drug Administration in Washington... (SLIGHT FADE)

40. PRESIDENT: (ON PHONE) But I tell you, Mr. Larrick...it's too late. This medicine is on druggists' shelves all over the country. By now...it's in medicine cabinets in hundreds of homes. What can we do.

41. LARRICK: All right, we'll get on it right away. First we'll get our regional offices busy...and we'll have a man out there at your plant in a few minutes.

42. PRESIDENT: We have all our shipping reports...we know what wholesalers we sent the medicine to. But what about the drugstores... and the people themselves! Hundreds of them may be ill already from taking that medicine.

43. LARRICK: We'll do what we can...

44. PRESIDENT: I'll get it on the radio and in the newspapers right away...

45. LARRICK: I think we can trace it all down. Meantime have all the records ready, and we'll throw out a dragnet for the drug immediately...(SLIGHT FADE)

46. FREYMAN: All regional and local offices of the Food and Drug Administration are notified at once. These people, with the cooperation of state, county, and city health officials go immediately to local wholesalers, and search laboriously through hundreds of pages of their delivery records to local drugstores...

47. JOHN: As soon as it is discovered which drugstores have the medicine on hand, in that particular area, health officers go immediately to the druggist and confiscate the offending drug from his shelves.

48. FREYMAN: From the druggists, the searchers learn who in the community has purchased the medicine...(SLIGHT FADE)

49. SOUND: HARD KNOCKING ON DOOR...PLUS DOORBELL RING AND KNOCKING AGAIN. DOOR OPENS...UNDER:

50. NURSE: Wake up in there! Let me in! (HEIGHTENED TONE) I'm very sorry to wake you up so late at night, Mr. Brown. But I'm a public health nurse and we're on the trail of some medicine which was distributed by mistake...

51. MAN: Hmmm...what? Medicine? What medicine?

52. NURSE: May I come in, sir?

53. MAN: (STILL SLEEPY) Sure...come on in...

54. NURSE: Your druggist told us that you purchased this drug only yesterday...and if I may look in your medicine chest... (FADES...THEN PROJECTS) Here it is, Mr. Brown. You see this...

55. MAN: Hey? Yes...I bought that. Haven't taken a dose of it yet. Was going to start tomorrow.

56. NURSE: Well, you might not have suffered any very bad effects, Mr. Brown. But by accident a wrong ingredient did get into this drug at the factory where it was made...and there was just a chance that it would have been harmful.

57. BROWN: Well...heh...glad you came and got it. Glad I didn't take any! Say...don't tell me you're going all over the United States taking this stuff off of people's shelves.

58. NURSE: I don't myself, Mr. Brown...but all over the country tonight, many hundreds of people are being awakened by Public health nurses, like me...and by Food and Drug officials. We won't stop until we have tracked down every last bottle of this medicine...

PAUSE:

60. JOHN: (NARRATION) Yes...in cases of emergency like this, FDA's relatively small staff of inspectors and scientists is multiplied into thousands of people, as local health departments join the search. In this particular case, over three million possibilities were traced down.

61. FREYMAN: Now, Johnny...we've heard about the statutes covering drugs and medicines! Let's hear something about the "food" part of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. What does that cover?

62. JOHN: Well, very simply, it's this. The statute says, for instance, that a food must not be injurious to health. Food, like the drugs we've just heard about, must be prepared, packed, and stored under absolutely sanitary conditions. It must conform to certain specified standards.

63. FREYMAN: Then too...we consumers can be absolutely confident in reading labels on any food. These labels, by law, cannot be false or misleading in any way. For instance, when you buy a product labeled Egg Noodles, you can be sure that they aren't just colored yellow to look like it...they're really made with eggs!

64. JOHN: In fact, isn't it true, Mrs. Freyman, that if a food is damaged, or below standard in any way, that fact must be included on the label.

65. FREYMAN: Yes, Johnny...and of course one food cannot be sold under the name of another. Food and drugs must also, under FDA rulings, weigh no more or no less than the weight stated on the label.

66. JOHN: Gosh, I certainly hate to think what it was like in the old days! We didn't have anything like that to protect us.

67. FREYMAN: No...and the manufacturers themselves didn't either. These statutes help them, as well. Before, there was nothing to prevent one manufacturer from adulterating his product any way he liked...and label it as he chose. And then of course, sell a low-grade product at a much cheaper price.

68. JOHN: Which could very well put his honest competition out of business. Well, today, Food and Drug officials not only help protect consumers against infringements of these food laws, but they help manufacturers put out pure, carefully labeled products. FDA people go through food processing plants, and warehouses on periodic inspection trips...

69. FREYMAN: But Johnny...do you mean there are enough inspectors to go through all the plants and warehouses in the country?

70. JOHN: No indeed...but most plants do conform to all the standards, and so these men can concentrate on the few which do not conform.

71. FREYMAN: Now Johnny, would you mind telling us what happens if a plant or warehouse is found not to be operating under sanitary conditions?

72. JOHN: Well, FDA has a right to ask a Federal Judge to close the plant, you know. And then if a food or drug product is under suspicion, the inspector sends in samples to the scientists, who make an analysis to see whether or not the product is adulterated or misbranded.

73. FREYMAN: And if it is?

74. JOHN: Well, these products can be seized. Or perhaps the manufacturer is crimnally prosecuted. And if the courts uphold the Food and Drug Administration, the product may either be destroyed, or returned to the owner for relabeling, or altering according to legal specifications. Then, of course, there are heavy fines.

75. FREYMAN: I see... Now let's hear some of the other laws governing the purity of foods...

76. JOHN: Well, you've noticed labels on many foods saying "artificial flavoring", or "artificial coloring". Those are required by FDA.

77. FREYMAN: Then I notice too that packages must be filled to the top... and they can't, well, look as though they hold more than they really do!

78. JOHN: Yes, that's another protection for the consumer's pocketbook. Then, consumers have been known to find bits of glass or other foreign matter in packaged food. When this is reported to the Food and Drug people, it's traced back to the manufacturer, and the remainder of the shipment is seized, and carefully checked.

79. FREYMAN: And now let's tell another dramatic incident. It is the duty of the FDA to trace down any cases of food poisoning, in case the food in question violates any part of the law.

80. JOHN: In tracing down food poisoning, a drag-net very much like the one used in calling in a dangerous drug, is used. A person ill with food poisoning, calls his doctor.

81. PATIENT: (SOUNDS VERY ILL) I don't know what it was, Doc. But I got an idea. About seven other guys got hit the same way I did.. I think it was something we ate at the picnic...

82. DOCTOR: You say you know of seven other people who are ill too? From the same thing?

83. SOUND: (TELEPHONE RECEIVER UNDER) Operator! Operator...get me the Health Department.

84. JOHN: The doctor may call his local health department to notify them of the cases of food poisoning. If they're able to find out what food or beverage it was...and if it looks as though this is a case for the Food and Drug authorities. Washington is notified, and local inspectors are put on the job immediately, trying to trace the source of the poison.

85. INSPECTOR ONE: Well, I'd say it's the beverage they drank that caused it all right. Now if no other cases of poisoning turn up in any other parts of the country, we'd better investigate the local bottler.

86. INSPECTOR TWO: No...but here's a message from Larrick in Washington. Says other cases are turning up...in other States...and it looks like the trouble's at the source.

87. INSPECTOR ONE: That means...it's not the local bottler...but the outfit that makes the concentrate. There's something sure gone wrong there...(SLIGHT PAUSE)

88. FREYMAN: (NARRATIVE TONE) FDA inspectors are immediately sent to the main plant which manufactures the concentrate that's distributed to various plants in the country to be put with water and bottled. (FADING) They see the superintendent.

89. SUPERINTENDENT: Here you are, gentlemen, here's a good sample of our product. We'll stop manufacture at once...and call in all our remaining shipments until the trouble is discovered. If anything's gone wrong in my plant...I want to know immediately.

90. INSPECTOR ONE: Thanks very much, sir. Okay, Joe, get this sample down to the airport right away and see that it's in Washington, first thing in the morning...

91. JOHN: (FAST NARRATIVE) The suspected concentrate is rushed by plane to Washington, D. C. and hurried by special car to the laboratories of the Food and Drug Administration...where it is put through every possible test by bacteriologists, chemists, microcologists, and other specialists.

92. FREYMAN: The analysis is made...and if the cause for food poisoning is discovered, the plant's shipments are stopped...and another case of poisoning is traced down to the source.

93. JOHN: Now that's all pretty dramatic, Mrs. Freyman. You know, I'm constantly amazed at the number of different things FDA does in connection with the Food and Drug and Cosmetic Act.

94. FREYMAN: Yes...I happen to know that several members of the staff offered themselves as test subjects for experimental work with Penicillin last year.

95. JOHN: That was part of FDA's wartime operation. You know, too, Mrs. Freyman, war conditions / meant that tighter controls were necessary. For instance, with certain foods scarce, there was a tendency to use adulterants in certain cases.

96. FREYMAN: Some foods were seized because they contained mineral oils instead of vegetable oils.

97. JOHN: The use of saccharin as a sweetening agent is prohibted. Not because it is in any way harmful, but because it has no food value.

And several foods were seized because they contained "stretchers" or other adulterants. For instance, one type of candy bar, labeled "peanut-coconut bar," was taken off the market. It contained puffed wheat instead of peanuts, and cornflakes substituted for coconut.

98. FREYMAN: But of course these are, as we have said, the exceptional cases. By far the majority of food and drug manufacturers produced wholesome products in clean factories.

99. JOHN: But the American consumer has the satisfaction of knowing ...at all times...that the Food and Drug Administration is on guard...to keep impure and adulterated food and drugs...out of the channels of commerce.

100. FREYMAN: And that concludes today's story.

JOHN: Be with us again next week...for another edition of...

SOUND: CASH REGISTER

ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME!

SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER.

ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME, written by Christine Kempton, is presented by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations. It comes to you from Washington, D. C. This broadcast period for CONSUMER TIME has been made available as a public service.

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